BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
3 9999 08632 535 2

No. 7551.222

THE TRUSTEES OF THE
PUBLIC LIBRARY
OMNIVM
LVX
CIVIVM
OF THE CITY OF
BOSTON
1852 · 1878

The Faith once delivered to the Saints.

BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

SERMON,

DELIVERED AT WORCESTER, MASS. OCT. 15, 1823,

AT THE

ORDINATION

OF THE

REV. LOAMMI IVES HOADLY,

TO THE PASTORAL OFFICE

OVER THE

CALVINIST CHURCH AND SOCIETY IN THAT PLACE.

755.222

BY LYMAN BEECHER, D. D.

Second Edition.

BOSTON:
PRINTED BY CROCKER AND BREWSTER,
No. 50, Cornhill.
1824.

C

From 4393.80
198134
June 1, 1876.

SERMON.

JUDE 3.

BELOVED, WHEN I GAVE ALL DILIGENCE TO WRITE UNTO YOU OF THE COMMON SALVATION, IT WAS NEEDFUL FOR ME TO WRITE UNTO YOU, AND EXHORT YOU THAT YE SHOULD EARNESTLY CONTEND FOR THE FAITH, WHICH WAS ONCE DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS.

By the faith once delivered to the saints, is to be understood the doctrines of the Gospel. These were delivered to the saints by holy men, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. The saints to whom they were delivered, were those who constituted the church under the Old dispensation, and the New.

The exhortation to contend for them earnestly, supposes that they would be powerfully assailed; and yet, that they might be known and defended.

It is proposed, in this discourse, to give an epitome of what is supposed to be the faith delivered to the saints;—to state the reasons for believing it such;—and to point out the manner in which it becomes the churches of our Lord to contend for it.

The faith once delivered to the saints included, it is believed, among other doctrines, the following:—

That men are free agents; in the possession of such faculties, and placed in such circumstances, as render it practicable for them to do whatever God requires; reasonable that he should require it; and fit that he should inflict, literally, the entire penalty of disobedience,—such ability is here intended, as lays a perfect foundation for government by law, and for rewards and punishments according to deeds.

That the divine law requires love to God with all the heart, and impartial love for men; together with certain overt duties to God and men, by which this love is to be expressed; and that this law is supported by the sanctions of eternal life and eternal death.

That the ancestors of our race violated this law; that, in some way, as a consequence of their apostasy, all men, as soon as they become capable of accountable action, do, *of their own accord*, *most freely*, and *most wickedly*, withhold from God the *supreme love*, and from man the *impartial love*, which the law requires, beside violating many of its practical precepts: and that the obedience of the heart, which the law requires, has ceased entirely from the whole race of man.

That, according to the principles of moral government, obedience, either antecedent or subsequent to transgression, cannot avert the penalty of law; and that pardon, upon condition of repentance merely, would destroy the efficacy of moral government.

That an atonement has been made for sin by Jesus Christ; with reference to which God can maintain the influence of his law and forgive sin, upon condition of repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ:—that all men are invited sincerely, in this way to return to God, with an assurance of pardon and eternal life if they comply.

That a compliance with these conditions is practicable, in the regular exercise of the powers and faculties given to man as an accountable creature; and is prevented only by the exercise of a voluntary, criminal aversion to God, so inflexibly obstinate that, by motives merely, men are never persuaded to repent and believe.

That God is able, by his Spirit, to make to the mind of man such an application of the truth, as shall unfailingly convince him of sin, render him willing to obey the gospel, and actually and joyfully obedient.

That this special influence of the Holy Spirit is given according to the supreme discretion or good pleasure of God; and yet, ordinarily, is so inseparably associated with the use of means by the sinner, as to create ample encouragement to attend upon them, and to render all hopes of conversion, while neglecting or rejecting the truth, or while living in open sin, eminently presumptuous.

That believers are justified by the merits of Christ through faith; and are received into a covenant with God, which secures their continuance in holiness forever;—while those, who die in their sins, will continue to sin wilfully, and to be punished justly, for ever.

That God exercises a providential government; which extends to all events in such a manner, as to lay a just foundation for resignation to his will in afflictions brought upon us by the wickedness of men, and for gratitude in the recep-

tion of good in all the various modes of human instrumentality;—that all events shall illustrate his glory, and be made subservient to the good of his kingdom;—and that this government is administered, in accordance with a purpose or plan, known and approved of by him from the beginning.

Finally, that the God of the universe has revealed himself to us as existing in three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; possessing distinct and equal attributes, and, in some unrevealed manner, so united as to constitute *one God.*

These are the doctrines, which, it is believed, were delivered to the saints, and which have been held, substantially, though with some variety of modification, by the true church of God in all ages. To prevent circumlocution, I shall, in this discourse, call them *the Evangelical System*, and for the same reason, I shall call the opposite doctrines *the Liberal System.**

It has been common to support these doctrines by the quotation of proof texts. But to these a different exposition is given more reasonable, it is said, and carrying with it a higher probability of truth; which leads to critical exposition, and opens a wide field for evasion, and creates perplexity and indecision.

My design, at present is to avail myself of collateral evidence only; with the view of attempting to decide, in this way, which is the correct exposition of the proof texts, the evangelical, or the liberal exposition.

For the sake of argument, I shall suppose the evidence from exposition to be, on each side, exactly balanced; and proceed to lay into the scale of evangelical exposition, those arguments which seem to furnish evidence of its correctness. I observe, then,

I. That the doctrines of the evangelical system are in accordance with the most direct and obvious meaning of the sacred text. By *obvious meaning*, I intend that which is actually suggested, without note or comment, to the minds of honest and unlettered men. That the proof texts teach the doctrines of the evangelical system in this manner, is alleged by learned infidels as a reason for rejecting the inspiration

* I choose to call these doctrines the evangelical system, not only because I believe them to be the Gospel; but because no man, or denomination, has held them so exclusively, as to render it proper to designate them by the name of an individual or a sect. It is a select system, which some of almost every denomination hold, and some reject; and which ought to be characterized by some general term indicative of the system as held in all ages and among all denominations of Christians. I call the oposite doctrines the liberal system, not as admitting that these doctrines, or their advocates, possess any peculiar claims to liberality, in any just acceptation of the term; but simply, because it is the epithet by which its friends have chosen to distinguish their religious opinions.

of the Bible; by Unitarian commentators and writers, as a reason for restraining, modifying, and turning aside, the text; and by critics, who translate or expound without reference to theological opinions; and by the better part of the Unitarian German critics, after having denied the inspiration of the Bible.* No translators have been able to maintain a reputation for classical literature, and to sink, in a translation, the obvious meaning below, and bring up the philosophical meaning upon, the surface.† The editors of the "Improved Version" have manifested as much good will, with as little conscience, in the attempt, as has ever appeared; and yet have been compelled to allow the proof texts, in most instances, to speak the offensive doctrines, and to content themselves with a simple contradiction of them in notes and comments. Interpretation according to the obvious import has always resulted in the evangelical system; while expositors according to the supposed rational and philosophical mode of exposition, have differed indefinitely. It is not the evangelical, but the liberal rule of interpretation, which has filled the world with divers doctrines, perplexity and doubt. All versions, and all expositions according to the obvious meaning, of whatever country or age, do substantially agree in the evangelical system; and agree with the understanding of mankind at large who read the Bible. The Bible, for the most part, was written also, by men who understood language only according to its obvious import;—and for the use of men, to whom it must have been a sealed book upon any other principle of interpretation. Add to this, the testimony of the Bible to its own plainness: that it can be read by him that runs; and understood by the wayfaring man though a fool; that it is a lamp to the path; that it furnishes the man of God thoroughly; that it is profitable for doctrine; that it is able to make wise to salvation; that it creates obligation to know the truth, and renders error inexcusable. Now if the obvious meaning of the proof texts be not the true one; and if the true meaning be one which can be seen only by men of classical and philosophical vision; then the common people have *no Bible*. For the book itself teaches *them* nothing; and the critical expositions of uninspired men are not a revelation. The character of God is also implicated, as having practised on his subjects a most deplorable deception; as having taught them falsehood in their own tongue, and the

* See Stuart's Letters, p. 155.

† This fact shows, that these remarks are as applicable to the original text, as to the translation; for surely, if the evangelical were not the obvious import in the original, nothing would be easier than to give a literal translation which should leave them out of sight entirely.

truth in an unknown tongue; for, to the common people, the obvious, is the only meaning of terms. If, therefore, the truth is not contained in the obvious meaning, it is not revealed to them in any form. Indeed, if the obvious be not the true import, the Bible teaches them falsehood. And yet, with a book, whose only intelligible meaning on the subject of doctrines is false, and whose real import is necessarily unknown, the common people are required, upon pain of his eternal displeasure, to abhor error, and to love and obey the truth.—Was the glorious God ever more scandalized than by such an imputation? We have heard of his having made a great part of mankind on purpose to damn them, and of his sending to hell infants and helpless victims, for the nonperformance of impossibilities: and, if such were indeed his character and conduct, I know not what other Bible we could expect, than one impossible to be understood, and framed to deceive. But, on this subject, we adopt the language of a distinguished advocate of the liberal system. "It is impossible that a teacher of infinite wisdom should expose those, whom he would teach, to infinite error. He will rather surpass all other instructors in bringing down truth to our apprehension. A revelation is a gift of light; it cannot thicken and multiply our perplexities."*

2. It is the uniform testimony of the Bible, that the righteous love the truth, and that the wicked are opposed to it.

If then, we can decide who are the wicked, in the Scriptural sense, which system they approve, and which they oppose; we have an inspired decision which is the faith delivered to the saints. But the Scriptures have decided that the irreligious and profane, and all persons of confirmed vicious habits, are wicked men. They have placed in the same class the ambitious, who love the praise of men more than the praise of God; and the voluptuous, who love pleasure more than God. Now that some of this description of sinners are found among the professed believers of both systems, is admitted; but which system do they, as a body, prefer; and against which do they manifest unequivocal hostility? It requires no proof, but universal observation, to support the position, that the irreligious, immoral and voluptuous part of the community, prefer the liberal system, and are vehement in their opposition to the evangelical system.† If this assertion needs confirmation; assemble the pleasure-loving and licentious community of the world;—

* Channing's Sermon, second Baltimore Ed. pp. 12, 13.

† The reader will observe, that we do not say, nor do we believe it to be true, that all, or even the majority, who professedly embrace the liberal system are wicked in the sense explained. We

the patrons of balls and theatres and masquerades:—and let the doctrines of the evangelical system be preached plainly to them. Would they be pleased with them? Would they endure them? Do this class of the community, where their numbers or influence preponderate, any where, in the wide world, settle and support an evangelical minister; and if they support the preaching of any system of doctrines, is it not substantially the liberal system? Go to the voluntary evening association for conference and prayer; and which system will you hear breathed out in supplication? Then go to the voluntary evening association for gambling or inebriation, and which system, with its patrons, will you hear loaded with execration and ridicule? When a division is made in a town or parish, by the settlement of a minister of liberal or evangelical opinions; which side do a majority of the pious take, if there be on earth any such thing as piety manifested by credible evidence; and which side do the wicked take, if there be on earth any such class of persons as wicked men—proved to be such by their deeds? If a majority is obtained against evangelical opinions, was it ever known to be done by the most pious and moral part of the community, in opposition to the suffrages of the most irreligious and flagitious?* There is, then, some powerful cause, of universal operation, which arrays the irreligious part of

know, and we gladly embrace the opportunity to acknowledge, that there are among them many whose talents and learning, whose amiable and generous dispositions, and whose devotedness to the public good, on many accounts, deserve our respect and commendation. There are, in this class of the community, many whom we not only respect and esteem, but whom, as connexions and friends we tenderly love. Our assertion is, that those who are wicked, in the Scripture sense of that term, do, as a body, whatever preaching they attend, and with whatever denomination they are classed, dislike the doctrines of the evangelical faith and prefer those of the liberal system.

* It may not be known to all who read this discourse, that, according to a late construction given to the laws of Massachusetts, the town, or society, may dispose of the funds which were given to the church; and dismiss or settle a minister without the concurrence, and in opposition to, the suffrage of the church. And that, in consequence of this decision, Unitarian ministers have often been settled by towns and societies, in opposition to the efforts of evangelical churches: by which means, they have been stripped of their funds, and exiled from their place of worship; and subjected to the necessity of forming a new society, and erecting another house of worship, unless they would consent to set under Unitarian ministrations, and forego that instruction which they considered an important means of salvation.

Now, in every one of these instances, it is believed, that the immoral and irreligious part of the town or society, have united with Unitarians; and sometimes, if not always, have contributed to the formation of a majority which could not have been obtained without them.

If it should be said, that, these men united with Unitarians from a restless spirit of opposition to religious institutions generally, and not with any reference to doctrinal opinions: the answer is, that, when Unitarians obtain the ascendency, the external religious order of the society remains as it was, and is supported by these wicked men with more ardour than before. But when the evangelical part of the society, with the church, prevails and the liberal part seceedes; these same wicked men seceede with them: so that, whether Unitarians prevail or act as a minority, the irreligious and profligate uniformly act with them; and never, in any case, act with the evangelical party. The wicked then will *support* religious order under Unitarian auspices, and, with Unitarians, will *abandon* it under evangelical auspices.

Does this look like a mere restless opposition to religious order, without reference to doctrinal opinions? Are Unitarians so notoriously and always opposed to religious order, as to attach the enemies of religious institutions uniformly to their party? Or is the evangelical system hated by wicked men because it is the truth, and the liberal system patronised by them, because they, whose deeds are evil, "love darkness rather than light?"

the community against the evangelical system. But, according to the Bible, of two opposing systems, one of which must be true, that which the wicked approve is false, and that which they oppose and hate is true;—"for he that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved."

3. The evangelical system produces the same effects, universally, as were produced by the faith delivered to the saints.

The maxim, that *the same cause, in the same circumstances, will produce the same effect*, is as true in the moral, as in the natural world; the laws of mind, and the operation of moral causes, being just as uniform as the laws of matter. The Gospel, the greatest moral cause which ever operated in the world, is the same now as in the apostolic age; and the heart of man, civilized or uncivilized, is also the same. So that this great cause is operating now, in substantially the same circumstances as it did in the primitive age;—for the heart of man is the moral world, and is the same now as then. If there be a system of doctrines, then, at the present time, whose effects are universally the same with those produced by the faith once delivered to the saints; that system, demonstrably, *is the faith* which was once delivered to the saints. Identity of moral effect, proves identity of moral cause.

The illustration of the argument from effects, must consist of many particulars, and of matters of fact. The argument, therefore, can only be stated concisely, without attempting to answer every possible objection. The facts, too, may be regarded by some as invidious. I have only to say, that no fact will be stated, as such, which is not believed to be notoriously true, and, if denied, capable of unequivocal proof; and as to the invidious bearing of matters of fact, or of arguments, I am persuaded it is both a false delicacy, and an unsound cause, which would shrink from this test, and shield itself under forms of alleged decorum. But I must be allowed to believe also, that no real decorum is violated by the statement of facts, or the pressure of arguments, where the object is important, the design honest, and the manner sober and respectful. Systems of religion, as well as of natural philosophy, may be brought to the test of actual experiment. "By their fruits shall ye know them." But if the moral world were, by the laws of decorum, closed against us; and we might only theorise without upon practical tendencies, and not enter it to collect and appeal to facts; we might contend earnestly, but certainly should contend to

very little purpose. To the word and testimony of God, and to matters of fact, we appeal.

I observe then, that the evangelical system occasions the same objections, precisely, now, which were occasioned by the faith once delivered to the saints.

Such an exhibition was given of old of the particular Providence of God, as occasioned, on the part of thieves, and liars, and adulterers, and idolaters, the extenuating plea, "We are delivered to do all these abominations."* God governs the moral world by such irresistible influence, that crimes are as much a matter of physical necessity as rain and sunshine. Do I need to say to this audience, that the charge constantly urged against the Decrees of God, as an article of the evangelical system, is, that it destroys accountable agency, and makes men machines, and all actions necessary by an irresistible fatality? The faith delivered to the saints then, and the evangelical faith, are perverted, in this article, exactly alike.

The ancient faith included an article which led the wicked, among the Jews, to extenuate their crimes by the allegation, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge;"† i. e. 'Sin in man is a physical property, transmitted from father to son, as bones and sinews are, and alike inconsistent with choice or blame.' And is not the objection urged against the doctrine of Original Sin, as contained in the evangelical system, the same? The inspired answer to the objection of old was, That children are accountable only for their own voluntary exercises and deeds; and this is the reply returned now by the patrons of the evangelical system.

The degree of human Depravity, as taught in the Bible, led the people, in a time of great wickedness, to say, "If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them and die, how should we then live?"‡ i. e. 'If we be dead in sin, to the exclusion of all spiritual life, how can we be free agents, and how can we help ourselves, or be justly blamed?' And, as if they had been told by the prophet, that their death in sin was voluntary and criminal, though entire, and certain in its efficacy; they seem to say, 'Well, if we are so wicked, that we certainly shall pine away and die in our sins, how can we be to blame? If we shall not turn of ourselves, how can we turn; and of what use is ability, that will never be exerted?' Now are not these precisely the objections which are at this day alleged, constantly, against

* Jer. vii, 10. † Ezek. xviii, 2. ‡Ezek. xxxiii, 10.

the doctrines of man's entire depravity, and moral inability, as articles of the evangelical system?

Our Saviour asserts the necessity of some great change to qualify a man for the kingdom of heaven; which, to a ruler in Israel, appeared mysterious, and even impossible. And is there not a great change insisted on, in the evangelical system, as indispensable to salvation; to which masters in Israel now, confess that they are strangers; and which they regard as impossible, without the destruction of free agency and accountability?

The manner of a sinner's Justification was delivered to the saints in such terms, as occasioned the objection, that it made void the law; superseding the obligations and motives to a moral life, and leading to licentiousness. "Do we then make void the law through faith?" "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" And is not this precisely the objection which has been urged against the doctrine of justification by faith, as contained in the evangelical system, from the time of the reformation to this day?

The saints were taught something concerning the Sovereignty of God, as having mercy on whom he would, and punishing whom he would;—which produced the objection, "Why then doth he yet find fault; for who hath resisted his will?" 'If wicked men receive their destination as God appoints; why does he blame them? If it be his will that they perish, and they do perish; are they not obedient? and why does he find fault?' And is not this the objection which is urged, unceasingly, against the doctrine of Election, as taught in the evangelical system? To our reply, that the will of God, as a moral rule to man, and the will of God, as a rule of administration to himself in disposing of rebels, are distinct; the answer is, 'Metaphysics! metaphysics! The will of God is the will of God; and if sinners, *in any sense*, act in accordance with any will of God, they are obedient; and he has no cause to find fault.' Now did the liberal exposition of the ninth of Romans ever produce, in the whole history of man, the objection which this chapter produced as written by the Apostle? or do liberal preachers ever have occasion to adopt the reply of Paul to objections produced by their exposition? But the evangelical exposition produces, invariably, the same objection which the Apostle encountered, and this objection receives, invariably, the same reply. "Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" 'Shall a being of yesterday arraign the conduct of his Maker? Shall a rebel sit in judgment upon his God? Are not men rebels, justly doomed to die; and, in reference to their character and con-

dition as condemned criminals, all clay of the same lump? And is not the discretion of God, to pardon or reprieve, as absolute, as that of the potter over his clay, to make one vessel to honor and another to dishonor?' Do you object, that the punishment threatened is unjust? But how could God make a vessel of *mercy* of one whose punishment would be unjust; or a vessel of *wrath* of one whose punishment would be undeserved? Do you call men impotent because they are compared to clay; or assert, that the sovereignty of God, in saving some, *causes*, and renders unavoidable, the destruction of others? We reply, those who perish, perish *for their sins*, for which they might have been punished, justly, without an offer of pardon. They might, if they would, comply with the terms of pardon, and are punished for rejecting them. Nor are they cut down in haste. With much long-suffering they are endured, while, by despising the riches of the goodness of God, they *fit themselves* for destruction. Such is the evangelical reply; and such, as we understand his language and argument, is the reply of Paul.

It was objected to the Gospel, and conceded, in the early age, that few embraced it but the poor, and the common people. "To the poor the Gospel is preached." "Have any of the Scribes and Pharisees believed on him?" "The common people heard him gladly." "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called." Celsus, in the second century, exulted in the fact, that so few in the higher classes of society, had professed Christianity; and poured contempt upon the cause, as patronized only by mechanics and vulgar people.* Now is it not notorious that the liberal system of doctrines, unpatronized by the civil power, has never been the religion of the common people in any country; but rather the religion of men of philosophical minds and literary habits? i. e. the evangelical system has been patronized chiefly, by that class of society which patronized the faith delivered to the saints; while the opposite system has relied for patronage, more commonly, on the arm of government, and on that class of men in society who, as a body, rejected the Gospel. A late writer, of high reputation, on the liberal side, in this country, says, "It is not to be doubted that, throughout our country, a very large proportion of those men, who for their talents and learning and virtues, have the most influence in the community, and have it in their power to do the most

* Are there no attempts making to create an impression now, that the liberal system is patronized peculiarly by persons in high life, by men of taste and talents, of wealth and refinement; and that the opposite system is fast going down, to be the religion of the common people only, and of the poor?

towards giving a right direction to the public feeling and the public sentiment, are dissatisfied with the Calvinistic and Trinitarian form in which they have had religion presented to them; but are prevented from making a public avowal of their opinions, by an unwillingness to encounter opposition and obloquy, and loss of confidence, and the power of being useful."* The evangelical system in this country is embraced then, by the same classes extensively, which embraced the Gospel; and is extensively disapproved by that class of men who rejected the Gospel.†

The faith delivered to the saints occasioned a virulent hatred. It was not hatred of it as false, arising from an ardent love of truth: for Pharisees and Sadducees could tolerate each other; and Pagans could tolerate thirty thousand gods, with all their lust and blood. And is not the evangelical system encountered by a virulence of opposition, in circumstances which show that it cannot arise from the love of truth or hatred of error? None will pretend, that the effects of the evangelical system are as deplorable, as the effects of idolatry in its present forms. The evangelical system has produced no temple of impure resort; no gratifications of lust enjoined as acts of worship; no blood of human victims; no burning of widows, or drowning of infants; no self-inflicted penal tortures. And yet, such is the hatred of many to the evangelical system, that they oppose, deliberately, all attempts to extend it to the heathen; and on the ground, avowedly, that they had rather the heathen would remain as they are, than adopt the evangelical system. In the face of all the absurdity and obscenity and blood of idolatry, not a few have declared, that they would not lift a finger to convert the whole pagan world to the evangelical faith, or words to that effect. They speak kindly of Infidels, Mohammedans, and Pagans; and fiercely of all which breathes the spirit of the evangelical system.

* Dr. Ware's Letters to Trinitarians and Calvinists, pp. 146, 147.

† If, to any, it should seem improbable that, the unlearned and obscure should be more likely to have the truth, than men of talents and learning; we are ready to admit, that the apprehension would be just, if the perception of the truth depended, exclusively, upon capacity and knowledge. But if, as the Bible declares, the truth is so plain, that the feeble and unlearned are able to perceive it, and its rejection is caused chiefly by the state of the heart; and if talents, and learning, and wealth, and power, occasion self-sufficiency, and ambition, and love of pleasure, with the cares of this world; diverting the attention from the truth, and increasing the prejudice of the heart against it; then men in the highest orders of society, are not as likely to have the truth as the common people: for the heart governs the understanding; and the peculiar aversion of learned and worldly men to the truth, throws more darkness upon it, than their superior intelligence serves to dispel; and creates a greater impediment to the perception of the truth, than is occasioned by any relative deficiency of capacity and knowledge among the common people. The argument, however, does not demand this explanation; for we do not infer the truth of the evangelical system from the fact, that, either class is more likely to have the truth; but, from the fact, that the same sort of men reject the evangelical system now, who rejected the Gospel; and the same sort embrace it now, who embraced the Gospel: furnishing a strong presumptive argument, that the evangelical system and the Gospel are the same, because they produce the same effects.

Such asperity the faith delivered to the saints occasioned: and such asperity the evangelical system occasions.

The faith delivered to the saints produced a stricter morality than any contemporaneous system. Whether this be true of the evangelical system, is not to be decided by a comparison of the best characters on one side, with the most defective on the other; or of individuals of good moral character on both sides, of which it is admitted there are many.* Nor can the moral efficacy of the two systems be decided by the standard of public morality, where the evangelical system has prevailed in the early period of life, and exerted its influence upon the conscience, and in the formation of moral habits; or where it still prevails to such an extent, as to exert a powerful modifying influence; and, especially, where the opposite system is of but recent public notoriety, and of limited extent. Great moral causes do not produce their effects immediately; nor, upon every individual, exactly the same effect. Their tendency and efficacy is to be looked for in those communities, where the influence of the two systems has been the most unmingled, and of the longest duration; and also, in those obvious changes in a community, which, as one or the other prevails, become apparent. With these explanations in view, I remark, that the superior moral efficacy of the evangelical system is a matter of unequivocal concession. In an article on predestination in the British Encyclopedia, written, it is said, by Robert Forsyth, Esq. a learned civilian, and an infidel; after giving an account of the Calvinistic and Arminian system, and the preference to the latter, it is said, "There is one remark which we think ourselves in justice bound to make. It is this; that, from the earliest ages, down to our own days, if we consider the character of the ancient Stoics, the Jewish Essenes, the modern Calvinists and Jansenists, compared with that of their antagonists, the Epicurians, the Sadducees, the Arminians and the Jesuits; we shall find that they have excelled, in no small degree, in the practice of the most rigid and respectable virtues; and have been the highest honor to their own age, and the best models for imitation to every succeeding age." This is the testimony of a philosopher, to the different moral effects of the two systems, from the time of Augustine, at least, to the present day.

Dr. Priestly, who will not be suspected of partiality for the evangelical system, says, that those who hold the evangelical doctrines, "have less apparent conformity to the

* We desire all that is said on this subject to be understood with the same explanation which we have made on p. 7.

world, and seem to have more of a real principle of religion." He says also, "Though Unitarian dissenters are not apt to entertain any doubt of the truth of their principles, they do not lay so much stress upon them as other Christians do upon theirs. Nor indeed is there any reason why they should, when they do not consider the holding of them to be at all necessary to salvation. They therefore, take much less pains to make proselytes, and are less concerned to inculcate their principles upon their children, their servants, and their dependents in general. From this principle it is, that great numbers, becoming Unitarians in the church of England, and even among the clergy, do not feel the impropriety and absurdity, to say nothing more harsh, of continuing to countenance a mode of worship, which, if they were questioned about it, they would not deny to be, according to their own principles, idolatrous and blasphemous. Such persons also, having no zeal for speculative religion, merely because they have no zeal for religion in general, their moral conduct, though decent, is not what is deemed strict and exemplary."*

In a periodical publication of high literary character, but of decided and known partiality to infidel opinions,† we find the following statements. "Predestination, or doctrines much inclining towards it, have, on the whole, prevailed in the Christian churches of the west, since the days of Augustine and Aquinas. Who were the first formidable opponents of these doctrines in the church of Rome? The Jesuits,—the contrivers of courtly casuistry, and the founders of lax morality. Who, in the same church, inclined to the stern theology of Augustine? The Jansenists,—the teachers and the models of austere morals. What are we to think of the morality of Calvinistic nations, especially the most numerous classes of them; who seem, beyond all other men, to be most zealously attached to their religion, and most deeply penetrated with its spirit? Here, if any where, we have a practical and decisive test of the moral influence of a belief in necessarian opinions. In Protestant Switzerland, in Holland, in Scotland, among the English Nonconformists, and the Protestants of the North of Ireland, and in the New-England States, Calvinism was long the prevalent faith, and is probably still the faith of a considerable majority. Their moral education was at least completed, and their collective character formed, during the prevalence of Calvinistic opinions. Yet where are communities to be found of a more pure and active virtue?"

* Discourses on various subjects, pp. 95, 96.

† Edinburgh Review.

The accusations brought against evangelical writers and professors, as requiring too much, or making no sufficient allowance for the weakness of human nature; as rigid, austere, enemies to innocent amusements; as setting themselves up as better than their neighbors; as righteous over much; are also concessions in point: as are also the topics of ridicule, having reference, as they do, to the fastidious strictness of our ancestors, and of evangelical professors: to which we may add, the invidious names given to them, of Puritan, Methodist, &c. It appears then, as a matter of fact, that sound morality has never, in any country or age, been so elevated, and so extensively prevalent, as in those communities where the evangelical doctrines have been most universally believed, and most diligently taught, in families and schools, and in the sanctuary. It has been said, I am sensible, that these salutary effects of the evangelical system are produced by the truths contained in it in common with the liberal system, and in spite of the errors it embraces, and not *by* them. Does the truth, then, mingled with absurdity and falsehood, produce better effects than the truth simple and undefiled, as in the liberal system it is claimed to be? If it is the truth, held in common by the evangelical and liberal systems, which produces these good effects, why does not the liberal system alone produce the same effects? Allow me to suggest another solution. The evangelical system *requires* a stricter morality, enforced by more powerful motives. It adopts, as its rule, the moral law, unmitigated; and its sanctions, of eternal life and eternal death. A law which the opposite system regards as too strict, and as set aside or mitigated, in accommodation to human frailty; and whose sanctions are regarded as nothing; —or as a salutary temporary discipline;—or as annihilation;— or as a matter of entire uncertainty. Now is it strange that lax requisitions, and feeble, uncertain sanctions, do not produce the strict and vigorous morality of the law of God. What would human laws avail, should expositors and judges say, 'Men are too wicked to allow of our interpreting the laws strictly: they must not be understood to mean exactly what they say, or to threaten exactly what they speak: perfect honesty, or truth, or purity, is not to be expected; a little fraud, and theft, and perjury, and violence, they allow, in accommodation to human weakness; and threaten the *greater crimes* with *no punishment*, or only a beneficial temporary discipline, or exile from the state, or—we know not what?'

Again, the evangelical system produces the best attendance on the public worship of God, and, of course, if the mo-

ral tendency of each were the same, that would produce the strictest and most general morality, which commanded, most extensively and deeply, the attention of men. That the doctrines of the evangelical system do this, is claimed, by Witherspoon as true, in his day, in Scotland; and by Overton, as true in England; and is admitted by English Unitarian writers, and denied by no one. It is also admitted in this country recently, as a matter of notoriety "which none will question." It is accounted for, it must be acknowledged, in a way not favorable to the moral tendency of evangelical sentiments. It is on the ground of the intolerable strictness of liberal preaching; so strict and terrifying, that few, besides the more pious and exemplary, can abide it. The whole pleasure-loving, voluptuous and dissipated community being driven, panic-struck, by Unitarian denunciation, to the horns of the altar in evangelical churches; where, by "smooth preaching," and the hope of impunity in sin, their fears may be allayed, and their consciences quieted.*

The faith delivered to the saints produced revivals of religion. The preaching of it was attended with sudden anxieties, and deep convictions of sin, and sudden joy in believing; followed by reformation and a holy life. Nor was this the effect of miracles, or itself a miraculous event, in the common acceptation of the term. Miracles merely, produced no such effects. It was under the preaching of the word, that men were pricked in their hearts, and cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?" And it was by the moral transformation, which attended the apostolic answer to this question, and not by the power of miracles, that the Gospel defied opposition, and spread during the first three hundred years. There was no resisting it. Conviction attended the word; and a joyful obedience to the faith followed. The very chiefs of opposition, exchanged their weapons of annoyance for the shield of faith, and the sword of the Spirit. And do not the same convictions of sin attend the preaching of the evangelical system; and does it not extend its victories in the same manner? By argument, merely, we convince few, and reclaim none. But there is an efficacy in evangelical preaching on the conscience and on the heart; against which neither learning, nor talents, nor prejudice, nor wrath itself, afford effectual protection. Multitudes who virulently hated, and verily thought that they ought to oppose, evangelical doctrines and revivals of religion, have been convinced of their mistake, and sin; and have embraced, joy-

* See a pamphlet entitled "Smooth Preaching" written by a Unitarian

fully, the doctrines which they reviled. Many who preach the liberal system can bear witness, that they have lost, in this way, again and again, the very pillars of their societies. Defections of the same kind are frequent still, and clothe evangelical doctrines and revivals of religion with a terrifying power.

The faith delivered to the saints was efficacious in the sudden reformation of those who had been long under the dominion of vicious habits. The apostle enumerates the habits of crime which prevailed among Pagans; and then, writing to the church of Corinth, says, "And such were some of you." But, while the liberal system despairs, professedly, of any sudden reformation from vicious habits, as against the established laws of the moral world; and is unable to produce an instance in which a vicious person has been reformed, by *abandoning the evangelical and adopting the liberal system;* and while reformation from vicious habits is a rare event, if it exist at all, under liberal preaching; it is a frequent event for profligates, on *abandoning their confidence in the liberal system and adopting the evangelical, to manifest a most salutary and abiding change of character and conduct.* In almost all the revivals of religion, which are now prevailing in our land, there are some to whom it may be said, "And such were some of you, but ye are washed," &c. Dr. Chalmers, who preached the liberal system twelve years, and after this the evangelical, says, "And here I cannot but record the effect of an actual, though undesigned, experiment, which I prosecuted, for upwards of twelve years, among you. For the greater part of that time, I could expatiate on the meanness of dishonesty, on the villany of falsehood, on the despicable arts of calumny; in a word, upon all those deformities of character, which awaken the natural indignation of the human heart against the pests and the disturbers of human society. Even at this time, I certainly did press the reformations of honor, and truth, and integrity, among my people; but I never once heard of any such reformations having been effected amongst them. If there was any thing at all brought about in this way, it was more than ever I got any account of. I am not sensible that all the vehemence with which I urged the virtues and the proprieties of social life, had the weight of a feather on the moral habits of my parishioners. And it was not till I got impressed by the utter alienation of the heart, in all its desires and affections, from God; it was not till reconciliation to him became the distinct and the prominent object of my ministerial exertions; it was not till I took the scriptural

way of laying the method of reconciliation before them; it was not till the free offer of forgiveness through the blood of Christ was urged upon their acceptance; and the Holy Spirit, given through the channel of Christ's mediatorship to all who ask him, was set before them as the unceasing object of their dependence and their prayers; it was not, in one word, till the contemplations of my people were turned to these great and essential elements in the business of a soul providing for its interest with God, and the concerns of its eternity; that I ever heard of any of those subordinate reformations which I aforetime made the earnest and the zealous, but I am afraid, at the same time, the ultimate, object of my earlier ministrations."*

The faith delivered to the saints produced a spirit of missions. On the day of Pentecost the number of disciples was one hundred and twenty. And on that day the scales of Jewish prejudice fell from their eyes; and the spirit of missions descended upon their hearts; and, in three hundred years, without colleges, or theological seminaries, or the press, or governmental aid, but in opposition to its dire hostility, they evangelized the world. And are not the great movements now making to evangelize the world, conducted chiefly under the auspices, and by the charities of those, who adopt substantially the evangelical system? Are not all the denominations in the world, who believe in the Divinity of Christ and his atonement, in the depravity of man and his need of a moral renovation by the Spirit; and in the doctrine of justification by faith, and future eternal punishment, more or less engaged in the work of missions? And is there, in the wide world, a denomination which rejects these doctrines, that is thus engaged? And is this system, which does nothing to evangelize the world, the Gospel; and that, which does all that is done in accordance with the efforts of the primitive church, not the Gospel?

The faith delivered to the saints produced a piety of great solemnity, and ardor, and decision. It was a piety which took delight in the public worship of God, and in frequent private association for religious conference and prayer; a piety, which included a deep solicitude, and made vigorous exertions, for the conversion of sinners, and experienced peculiar joy in the event; a piety, which espoused openly the cause of Christ, encountered obloquy and the loss of all things, and stood undaunted in the face of danger, and produced joy unspeakable in the hour of death. And is not this, pre-

* Chalmers' Farewell Discourse addressed to his parishioners of Kilmany in his series of Discourses, pp. 110, 111, 112.

cisely, the same cast of piety which the evangelical system does, and which the liberal system does not, produce? Is not the deeply serious cast of the one, regarded as constituting the evangelical a gloomy religion; and the lighter cast of the other, as giving to it vastly the preference on the score of cheerfulness? Is not the ardor of the one, stigmatized as enthusiasm; and the cool, deliberate, intellectual cast of the other, regarded as giving to it the enviable preeminence of a rational religion? Does not the one delight in, and the other deprecate, frequent voluntary associations for religious conference and prayer? Does not the one ridicule the supposed work of sudden conversion by the Spirit of God; and the other hold it in the highest estimation? Do not the converts to the one system, as far as they are called to it, disregard obloquy, and endure persecution? While, "Throughout our country, a very large proportion of those men, who, for their talents and learning and virtues, have the most influence in the community, are dissatisfied with the Trinitarian and Calvinistic form, in which they have had religion presented to them; but are *prevented from making a public avowal of their opinions by an unwillingness to encounter opposition, and obloquy, and loss of confidence, and the power of being useful.*"* Are the sentiments which these men, "*all over our country*," are supposed to prefer to the evangelical system, *The faith once delivered to the saints;* which, in the primitive church, produced a love to Jesus Christ so ardent, an avowal of his doctrine so undaunted, and an enterprise so efficient, as moved onward, from conquering to conquer, through good report and evil, through honor and dishonor, through fire and blood? Alas! how is the gold become dim, and the fine gold changed?—But is it so? Is that the primitive faith which produces none of these consequences; and is that another, and an opposite faith, which produces them all?

With respect to the manner in which cordial believers in the two systems die, we have only to say, that, generally, professors of religion of evangelical opinions, who have in life adorned their profession, approach their last hour without fear, and with great composure of mind, and with cheerful resignation. In some instances they, even as the Apostle Paul did, desire to depart and be with Christ; and, not unfrequently, their views and affections and anticipations of glory render them exceedingly joyful in the last hour. Now we ask, and refer for an answer, to every man's observation, Is this the manner in which liberal opinions enable those to

* Dr. Ware.

die who cordially embrace them? If some of this description meet death without fear, are not many terrified at his approach? If some are tranquil, are not more agitated? If some manifest resignation, do not a far greater number cling, with unyielding grasp, to life, or manifest only the resignation of necessity? And are there any, who, by the liberal system, are inspired with such love for Christ, as to desire earnestly to depart and be with him? And, especially, are there any, whose views and affections and anticipations of glory render their death-bed a scene of the most exalted joy?

The faith delivered to the saints was attended, from the beginning to the end, with an unwavering confidence of its truth. False christs and false prophets arose; but they could not "deceive the elect." Winds of false doctrine blew, but they scattered only the chaff; some also made shipwreck of the faith, but it was not the saints. There were heresies early; and it was needful there should be, that they which were approved might be manifest. And they were manifest; for the last Apostle that remained testified, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us." But to those, who adhered to the faith, he said, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things:"* i. e. You know the truth of all those doctrines which some have rejected. Now it is admitted, that some patrons of the evangelical system abandon it. But it will not be denied, that, as a general fact, they hold the same system of truth to the end; modified, explained, and proved, with some variation; but the same system undeniably. But can it be said of the patrons of the liberal system, as a body, that their system, first and last, is the same? Can it be said of an individual scarcely, that he continues to embrace the same system through life? Dr. Priestley has told us, that he was first a Calvinist; and that he successively embraced, and abandoned, in his way downward to low Socinianism, all the intervening systems; and did not know how long he should maintain his existing faith, or what would come next. The same course has been travelled over by liberal critics and learned expositors in Germany: and in this country, it is begun, it is believed, by most, and completed by many, who adopt the liberal system. Is it not notorious that evangelical men are reproached, as being singularly confident that they only are right; and that Unitarians profess to have arrived at certainty *chiefly* in

* 1 John ii. 19, 20.

respect to the *falsehood of the evangelical system;* while, in relation to their own, there are many points on which they have not *had time* to make up their minds; and concerning which, with *other wise and great and good men,* they continue to doubt? Indeed, it might appear unseemly for men, who had discovered that four out of five of their systems of belief, deliberately adopted, were wrong, to entertain a very high opinion of the powers of their *own* reason at least, or to be confident of the truth of their fifth or sixth opinion, in respect to the great points of revealed doctrine. But where, among these changing men, "ever learning" their *past errors*, "and never coming to the knowledge of the truth;" where is that unction from the Holy One which the saints possessed, and its attendant knowledge of all things?*

4. A departure from the faith delivered to the saints, producing divisions in the church, was denominated a heresy during the three first centuries.

This does not prove those doctrines to be false which the churches condemned, because churches and councils are not infallible. But it does prove the opinions denominated heretical, to be novelties, and in opposition to the received opinion of the church until the time of their condemnation. The declaration of the primitive church that a doctrine is a heresy, is a public formal testimony, as to what had been, until then, the received opinion of the churches.

The heretics themselves admitted, sometimes, that their opinions were novel, but contended that they were nevertheless true; or, more commonly, so explained them, as to claim that they were not a departure from the received faith. Uniting, of course, the testimony of heretics, to that of the church, as to what had been the received opinion.

* A writer of eminence, in a sermon from 1 Cor. xiii, 10, delivered at an ordination,† assumes, without any attempt at exposition, or proof, that even the Apostles *knew but in part:* from which has resulted "diversity of opinion," and the fact, that, though of two opposite opinions, both cannot be true; "they may both be innocent:" and that this imperfection of knowledge may have been designed "as a moral discipline," and "to give a larger scope, and new occasion, for the exercise of good feeling." It certainly would have been relevant and desirable, that it should have been ascertained whether this *conceded ignorance* of the apostles, respected doctrinal knowledge, or only experimental knowledge, begun in time, and to be consummated in heaven; the *latter*, seeming to be the subject of discourse, and not at all the former. Whether their *partial ignorance* of Christian doctrine, had respect to a *partial revelation* of the doctrines of Christianity, or to the doctrines, which are revealed. If it respected revealed doctrines, whether their *ignorance* was owing to their indolence, or incapacity to understand, or to such obscurity in the revelation of them, that even Apostles could understand only a part of the doctrines which God had revealed. We cannot but admire, if it were partial doctrinal knowledge which is conceded by the Apostles, how they should have drawn inferences from the fact, so directly opposed to those which were drawn by this writer. The one, inferring charity and moderation; the other, the duty of contending earnestly for the faith. The one anathematizing any man, or even an angel, who should preach any other gospel; and the other, inferring from the same premises, the equal innocence of doctrinal truth and doctrinal falsehood.

† *Dr. Ware's Sermon delivered at the ordination of the Rev. William B. O. Peabody, at Springfield,* 1826.

From the nature, then, and the known æra, of the several heresies in the primitive church, we may ascertain what was the antecedent faith of the church, on the points to which they relate.

The doctrine of the Incarnation of Christ was, then, the received opinion of the church, when denied by the Gnostics, towards the close of the first century. The Divinity of Christ was the received opinion of the church when denied by Arius, A. D. 315; who, soon after, was condemned as a heretic in a council of 380 Fathers. And the doctrines of original sin, entire depravity, regeneration by special grace, and justification by faith, continued to be the received doctrines of the church until the time of Pelagius, about A. D. 400.

The doctrines of the evangelical system, then, commenced their journey down to us from the apostolic age: and as each doctrine of the liberal system encountered any one of them, *that*, was declared by the church to be a novelty, and the other the antecedently received opinion of the church. Can this fact be reconciled with the supposition that the liberal system, was the faith *first* delivered to the saints? Did all the churches, from the beginning, misunderstand the import of the Gospels and Epistles, and all the apostolic expositions of them; and misunderstand, systematically, and exactly alike, on all points, and in direct opposition to what Jesus Christ and the Apostles intended to teach; and this too, without concert, and throughout the Roman Empire? Or if the liberal was the system first delivered to the saints, could all the churches have exchanged it for the opposite system, so early, so silently, so unitedly, as to have the *whole truth* regarded as a novelty, and denounced as a heresy, in the second and third and fourth centuries? Dr. Priestley has indeed, attempted to show that the liberal system was that which was actually delivered by Christ and his Apostles to the saints, and that such a change as we have supposed, did happen in the progress of two or three hundred years. But, beside the utter failure of his proof,* he might as well have attempted to show, that the course of all the rivers in the Roman Empire was reversed during the three first centuries of the Christian æra, in opposition to the testimony of all the historians and naturalists of the empire, convened by public authority, on purpose to inquire into the matter of fact.

5. It is a point decided by inspiration, that the Martyrs who suffered under Pagan and Papal persecutions, held the

* See Tracts in controversy with Dr. Priestley by the Rev. Heneage Horsley, A. M. Also, A Vindication of the doctrine of Scripture and of the primitive faith, concerning the Divinity of Christ, in reply to Dr. Priestley's History of Early Opinions, &c. by the Rev. John Jamieson, D. D. F. R. S. of Forfar.

same faith; and that the faith which they held, and for which they suffered, is the faith which was delivered to the saints. The Apostle John saw in vision "under the altar, the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held."* It is called in another place, "the commandments of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ."† These are the Martyrs under Pagan Rome. But with reference to those who suffered afterwards, under Papal Rome, it is said: "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus."‡ The faith, then, which the Martyrs held, under Pagan and Papal Rome, and for which they suffered, was the same, and was the WORD OF GOD AND THE FAITH OF JESUS. But we know, by evidence unequivocal and undeniable, that the doctrinal opinions of the Martyrs under Papal Rome were the doctrines of the evangelical system, and not those of the liberal system. They exist now upon historical records, and in public creeds; and are denominated the doctrines of the Reformation. The doctrines of the Reformation then, which we denominate the evangelical system, have the seal of heaven impressed upon them, as being the WORD OF GOD AND THE FAITH OF JESUS, THE FAITH WHICH WAS ONCE DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS.

I am now to explain the manner, in which the churches of our Lord should contend for the faith. And,

I. By a proper exercise of their civil influence.

The rights and duties of Christians, as members of a civil community, are not, it is believed, generally understood. As, in the first generations of New England, every thing, almost, was done, by civil government, to promote religion; the idea has descended, that Christians have *some influence* to exert, favorable to religion, through the medium of government: without the perception, exactly, how it is to be done, in the present altered state of things. Christians now, in their civil capacity, are members of a great empire, whose administration cannot be modified in accommodation to local religious purposes. A multitude of denominations of Christians have arisen also; each, upon principles of religious liberty, entitled to impartial protection; and excluding, in behalf of any, governmental favoritism.—In this new state of things, Christians are perplexed, and know not what to do. They are afraid to withhold their efforts to benefit religion through the medium of government; and, environed by difficulties and dangers, they are afraid to exert it. For my

* Rev. vi, 9. † Rev. xii, 17. ‡ Rev. xiv, 12.

own satisfaction, in the first instance, I have been led to investigate the subject; and, though I have not found it unattended with difficulties, my mind rests in the following results.

(1.) Christians are not to attempt to control the administration of civil government, in things merely secular.

This is what our Saviour refused to do, when he declined being a king, or ruler, or judge. It would secularise the church, as the same conduct secularized the church of Rome:—and bring upon her, and justly, a vindictive reaction of hatred and opposition. When great questions of national morality are about to be decided, such as the declaration of war; or, as in England, the abolition of the slave trade; or the permission to introduce Christianity into India by Missionaries; it becomes Christians to lift up their voice, and exert their united influence. But, with the annual detail of secular policy, it does not become Christians to intermeddle, beyond the unobtrusive influence of their silent suffrage. They are not to "strive, nor cry, nor lift up their voice in the streets." The injudicious association of religion with politics, in the time of Cromwell, brought upon evangelical doctrine and piety, in England, an odium which has not ceased to this day.

(2.) It is equally manifest, that Christians should not attach themselves, exclusively, to any political party, or take a deep interest in political disputes.

No party is so exclusively right, as to render it safe for any man, to commit his conscience to its keeping, and act implicitly according to its dictation. Nor can any party, in a popular government, be sufficiently secure from change, to render it safe, to identify with it the interests of religion. Besides, if Christians enter deeply into political disputes, they will be divided, and one denomination arrayed against another, in their prayers and efforts; and one Christian against another, in the same church. A spirit of party zeal creates also, a powerful diversion of interest and effort from the cause of Christ; creates prejudices in Christians one against another; and, in the community, against the cause itself. It annihilates spirituality of mind; prevents a spirit of prayer, and efforts for revivals of religion; and renders Christians the mere dupes and tools of unprincipled, ambitious men. No sight is more grievous, or humiliating, than to see Christians continually agitated, by all the great and little political disputes of the nation, the state, the city, and town, and village; toiling in the drudgery of ambition; and flowing hither and thither, like waves which have no rest, and cast up only mire and dirt. I am persuaded that there has been utterly a fault among Christians in this thing; and that there is no one particular in which it is more important that there should be a reformation.

(3.) It is plain also, that no attempt should be made by Christians of one denomination, to hinder the prosperity of other denominations, by any monopoly of governmental influence and favor.

The end of heaven has been answered, in the powerful and direct aid given to the churches, by the civil fathers of New-England. Then, it was needed, to lay foundations, to form habits, to surmount obstacles, and to carry the churches through the wilderness. But now, it is not needed; and cannot be bestowed, in the manner it has been. All denominations of Christians must live now, by a general impartial favour of government, and their own efforts; the goodness of their cause, and the smiles of heaven. The *favoritism* of government, in a free country is an advantage too precarious also, to be employed, safely, by any denomination. For, such is the instability of popular governments, that their partial aid if resorted to might exalt at one time, and abandon and persecute at another. All denominations have an equal interest, now, in renouncing all attempts at securing the partial favour of government; and in insisting upon impartial protection and favour only.

Should any denomination, however, be so destitute of wisdom, as to attempt to propagate its opinions, and facilitate its progress, by a monopoly of literary influence, through governmental favour, and by rendering their own sentiments a passport to places of honor and trust, in the higher, and more subordinate, stations of civil office and employment; if in these, and other ways, they should seek to give to themselves, by the adventitious favour of government, a weight in the community, and an influence on the public mind, favorable to their own religious views, and adverse to those of other denominations: in such case, civil and religious liberty would authorise and demand, that all Christians of other denominations, should withhold their suffrage from the ambitious sect who had perverted and abused the public confidence. This, by those who should experience the salutary admonition, would be deprecated, no doubt, as "*introducing religion into politics*;" but it would in fact be, only a righteous effort to *put that religion out of politics* which they had unrighteously identified with them; and to place the religious rights and privileges of Christians, upon an equality. When this had been accomplished, persons of worth, of that denomination, exempt from such sectarian bias as would abuse the confidence reposed in them, might enjoy the public favor as before.

(4.) I cannot perceive that churches are bound in point of duty, or required on the ground of policy, to confine their suffrages exclusively, to persons of their own denomination, or to regulate them, exclusively, with reference to piety or doctrinal opinions.

There are certain guarantees of integrity, and of security to the general interests of religion, which, as Christians, we are bound to require. There must be such a belief in the being of God, and of accountability and future punishment, as lays a foundation for the practical influence of an oath: such exemption from immorality, as will render the elevated example of rulers safe to the interest of public morals: such general approbation of the christian religion, and its institutions, as will dispose them to afford to religion the proper protection and influence of government: and such exemption from sectarian zeal, as will secure from abuse, the confidence of other denominations, and an administration impartial in its aspect upon all of them. But where these securities are given, I do not perceive that Christians are forbidden to repose confidence in men, for civil purposes, who do not profess religion, or afford evidence of piety. Men of piety are doubtless to be preferred, and greatly to be desired, other things being equal: but I cannot perceive that the qualifications for civil trust, and for membership in the church, are the same: and wherever they have been so regarded, the consequence has been, the intrusion of unsanctified men, by a lax examination, or by dispensing entirely with piety as a qualification for communion. As long as communion in the English church shall continue to be an indispensable qualification for office; so long will the tide of ambition roll through her interior, and damp the fire upon her altars. It was the mistake of our pious fathers, in making the terms of communion and civil trust the same, which produced the lax mode of admission to the churches of New England, followed by the long and dreadful declension from evangelical doctrine and piety, which, in many churches, continues to this day: and the same course, persisted in, would perpetuate the same effects.

What, then, is the ground, which the churches ought to take? It is the high ground of christian temper, christian principle, and christian practice. It is a great mistake, if any suppose that their conduct, in relation to things spiritual, may be regulated by one rule, and in things civil, by another. The Gospel furnishes Christians with rules for their entire direction, in all things. In this respect, as well as others, "the law of the Lord is perfect;" and every man of God, is, by his Bible, "thoroughly furnished unto every good work."

Let Christians, then, not under the influence of party zeal, but in the fear of God, as those who must give an account, withhold their suffrages from men whose known opinions destroy the practical influence of an oath; whose open hostility to all religion, renders it unsafe and sinful to confide in them; whose immoral habits would contaminate the public morality; or whose sectarian zeal would incapacitate them

for a liberal and impartial legislation on the subject of religion: and when this is done, let them no longer know "any man after the flesh;" but, without reference to political party, or doctrinal creed, vote for those who are, in other respects, worthy of their confidence. Every community needs, in its bosom, men of cool and uncommitted feeling, to allay the fierceness of party strife, and to come forth for the salvation of the nation, on emergencies of danger. And why should not an host of such men, lovers of their country and their God, be found in the church; instituted by heaven to promote peace on earth and good will to men? The interests of science and literature, are regarded as too important to be identified with political parties; and are permitted to enjoy the retreat of the groves, far from the noise of strife and war. And why should not the interests of religion, be allowed to stand aloof from the conflicts of ambition, and the din of controversy? As political animosities rage, in free governments, and competitions for office and power are conducted, and ever will be, till the world is far better than it now is;—every Christian may say of political partizans as Jacob said of Simeon and Levi. "Instruments of cruelty are in their habitations: O, my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honor be not thou united."

The effect of such a retreat by Christians, from the annual details of party strife, and of the silent exertion of evangelical influence in the exercise of the right of suffrage, would be attended with the happiest effects. The political alienation of Christians would cease, and be followed by the increase of brotherly love. Their diversion from religious enterprise would cease, and they would have more time and more zeal for the service of Christ. The prejudice against religion, occasioned by their political officiousness, would be avoided; and that influence, which, before, was worse than lost in the turmoils of party, would be sanctified and devoted to the cause of Christ.

In all the competitions for political elevation, of which there will always be many in free governments; the suffrage of a christian community, held in reserve, to be exercised under the influence of conscience, and a cool uncommitted discretion, would have an influence highly salutary to the state, and to the interests of piety and morality. As long as Christians are divided, and will vote blindly, under the influence of a political mania; no individual fears the consequence of irreligion, or immorality; and no party, fears the consequence of them in their candidates for office. But if Christians retire from unhallowed competitions, to bestow their suffrage by the dictation of an enlightened conscience, they will hold an amount of suffrage, not to be lightly regarded or despised on either side. In this, there is no elec-

tioneering, no officious meddling, and no violence. Christians exercise their own civil rights, under the guidance of their own consciences, enlightened by the word of God; and in doing it, allay the violence of party, elevate the standard of morality, and secure to religion all the protection that it needs, and to their country, so far as their influence can avail, an administration of the government, devoted to the public good, and not to the interests of a party. Experience has evinced the vanity of all hopes of religious and moral purity from the influence of civil governments directly: government itself, needs to be brought under the influence of christian principle, and to be embued with christian feeling: an event, which can be accomplished, only, as the public opinion shall be purified, and regulated by religious and moral principle. But this silent leaven of the mass, can be the result only, of a general increase of religion, and the proper exercise by Christians of their civil influence. I would say therefore in the language of Wilberforce "Let true Christians, with becoming earnestness, strive in all things to recommend their profession, and to put to silence the vain scoffs of ignorant objectors. Let them boldly assert the cause of Christ in an age when so many, who bear the name of Christians, are ashamed of Him; and let them consider as devolved on them the important duty of suspending for a while the fall of their country, and, perhaps, of performing a still more extensive service to society at large; not by busy interference in politics, *in which it cannot but be confessed there is much uncertainty;* but rather by that sure and radical benefit of restoring the influence of religion, and of raising the standard of morality. Let them cultivate a catholic spirit of universal good will, and of amicable fellowship towards all those, of whatever sect or denomination, who, differing from them in non-essentials, agree with them in the grand fundamentals of religion. Let them countenance men of real piety wherever they are found; and encourage in others every attempt to repress the progress of vice, and to revive and diffuse the influence of religion and virtue. Let their earnest prayers be constantly offered, that such endeavors may be successful, and that the abused longsuffering of God may still continue to us the invaluable privilege of vital Christianity."

2. The churches of our Lord are to maintain the faith delivered to the saints by inculcating it early, and earnestly, upon children.

Catechetical instruction was adopted, universally, by the primitive Christians; was practised by the Waldenses as their safeguard against the seductions of the Papists; was resorted to by the churches of the Reformation, and continued by the churches of New England; and has uniformly been followed

by the revival or decline of religion, as it has been persisted in or neglected. It is pre-eminently important that there be in the church, symbols of evangelical doctrine, associated with the earliest recollections of her children.

The objection, that children cannot understand the doctrines of the Bible, is unfounded. They can understand them, in their order, as early as they can understand any thing. The being and character of God, the doctrines of accountability, depravity, and the necessity of a moral change, are comprehended by children early, and with great ease. But even if they do not, at the time, understand the *words* they commit to memory, will they never understand them, or derive benefit from them? Would any parent be willing to risk the commitment by his children of obscene songs, because, at the time, their import was not understood? Would not the words be a leaven of impurity in the memory, to contaminate the mind as it opened to the comprehension of their meaning? So the doctrines of the Bible, though deposited as a dead letter, may become a fountain of life to the soul, when it shall open the eye of its understanding upon them.

The plan of leaving children uninstructed in religion, that they may come with an unbiassed mind to the subject, is impracticable. An evil heart is, itself, a powerful bias against the truth. And, if the servants neglect to sow good seed, the enemy will certainly sow tares. The sure consequence of leaving children to grow up without religious instruction, will be irreligion, and prejudice against the truth. Whenever, therefore, our doctrinal catechisms are laid aside, a breach wide as the sea is opened for the enemy to come in.

3. The faith delivered to the saints must be maintained by means of literary institutions, regulated and controlled by its sanctifying power.

It is evident, that the youth of our colleges cannot be governed without efficient moral influence. In our free country, neither military coersion, nor civil power, nor ambition, will, alone, avail to subdue the vicious propensities, and direct the principles and habits, of the young. Moral influence must be employed; and the most powerful moral influence is that exerted by evangelical religion. This system of faith imposes a stricter rule of duty, and enforces its requisitions by more powerful sanctions, attended, when faithfully exhibited, by the influences of the Spirit, giving them effect on the heart. The salutary influence of revivals, and of the beneficiaries of the churches, in our colleges, in promoting among the young men, generally, purity of morals, and increasing the facilities of government, are manifest and great.

Another proof of the necessity of such an influence is found in the destructive consequences of a perverted litera-

ture. Talents and learning are moral power; and cannot be arrayed against religion, without disastrous effects. If these, then, are beheld chiefly in alliance with error, and the truth associated chiefly with uncultivated intellect; how great and powerful will be the prepossession in favor of error, and against the truth? We may as well expect the application of all the mechanical powers in the natural world, without effect, as of the energies of talent and literature in the moral world, without effect. A reliance on the power of God, in such circumstances, is presumption; for it supposes, in opposition to the declarations of his word, and his providences, that he will protect by miracle without the use of means.

The opinion that God has dispensed with learning and talents as auxiliaries in the work of defending and propagating the faith, has been adopted hastily and without reason. The foolishness of preaching by which he saves, is not foolish preaching; and the weak things which he employs to confound the mighty are not uncultivated intellect and ignorance. The principal defenders of the faith in the Primitive Church were men of vigorous minds and extensive knowledge. The Apostles could speak in every tongue; and, besides having been instructed by Christ, were, by the Holy Ghost, reminded of his words, and taught what to say. Augustine was, in his day, a host. Luther and Calvin were men of might. And the Reformers, generally, had the advantage of their antagonists in literature and science. That none should preach the gospel, who have not had the advantages of a liberal education, we do not assert, nor believe. But that such should be the ordinary qualifications of Ministers, we do stedfastly believe.

Is it necessary to add, that, it is the duty of the church, universally, to withhold her sons from those literary institutions which are hostile to the doctrines of grace? It is ludicrous to pretend that "no doctrines in particular are taught" in such institutions; and that no influence is exerted to bias the minds of young men against the evangelical system. We might as well speak of a sword with no edge in particular, or a book containing no ideas in particular, as of religious instruction without any religious doctrines in particular. Besides, what shall we think of churches, associated on purpose to train up youth in the doctrines of Christianity, sending them where "no doctrines in particular are taught?" And is it true, can it without a miracle be true, that no influence is exerted, in such institutions, to pervert the minds of young men? Will the faculty, whose opinions are known and revered, as they are wont to be, by their pupils, and who hold in their hands the distribution of literary honors, have no influence in forming a popular sentiment hostile to the doctrines of the Reformation? Will this atmosphere of op-

position and ridicule, in which a youth, whose previous education has been evangelical, is sent, to live and move and have his being, exert no influence in unsettling his opinions? Possibly he may not make shipwreck of the faith; but is this a justification for exposing him to temptations, which, to nineteen in twenty, will prove fatal? How many pious parents already weep over blasted hopes? How many children of the church have, through the perversion of their talents and acquirements, become her most powerful adversaries? Were the evils confined to the unhappy victims, it would be deplorable: for what shall it profit a man if his son gain the highest point of literary attainment and renown, and lose his soul? But many parents of evangelical opinions, influenced by the example of Christians, may send their children who are not themselves beyond the reach of perversion. And all may have brothers, and sisters, and companions, and relatives, on whom they may exert a fatal influence, and thus become the instruments of an extended diversion of the public opinion.

4. The faith delivered to the saints is to be contended for by a faithful exhibition of its sanctions.

These are contained, in the punishment threatened to the rejection of truth, as a crime; and the calamities inseparable from the rejection of it, if it were not a crime. The doctrines of revelation are not articles of speculation merely, but principles of moral goverment. They disclose the law, the Gospel, and the providence of God. They are declared also, to be so plain, that they can no more be misunderstood, innocently, than darkness can be mistaken, innocently, for light, bitter for sweet, thorns for grapes, thistles for figs, tares for wheat, or ashes for bread. But if there were no criminality attached to the rejection of the truth; the calamities of rejecting it, would be the same, as if its rejection were criminal. If we could separate criminality from sin, it would still be a principle of misery. Enmity against God, malevolence, envy, revenge, intemperance, and lust, are sources of misery, if they were not crimes; and thus it is with fundamental error in doctrine. The character, law, Gospel, and providence of God, are realities, as unmodified by human opinion, as the laws of the natural world: and the calamity of adopting false opinions on these subjects, and of opposition of heart to the true character and government of God, is the same, in its consequences as a calamity, whether it be criminal or not. "To be carnally minded," in either case, "is death." He that goes into eternity, in a state of opposition to the character and government of God, is undone, whether guilty or not guilty. It is an admitted fact, that repentance and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ are, some how, indispensable to render it consistent for God to pardon

sin. But this repentance, and this faith, are definite realities; and, if a mistake were not criminal, *that* which is not repentance, cannot have the *effect* of repentance, and *that* which is not faith, cannot have the *effect* of faith, in rendering it consistent for God to pardon sin; however innocently the mistake may come to pass.

Besides, men, as sinners, must be sanctified, as well as pardoned, to fit them for heaven. But their sanctification must be accomplished, not by physical power exclusively, but by the instrumentality of the truth. It no more belongs to omnipotence to give to error, the effect of truth, on the minds of free agents, than to cause a thing to be, and not to be, at the same time. A law without rewards or punishments, cannot *be made* as influential, on moral beings, as a law with sanctions, at all more than vacuity in the scales, can *be made* as weighty as lead. Thou shalt kill cannot be *made* to have the same effect, as the prohibition, "thou shalt not kill." And "the soul that sinneth it shall" *not* "die," cannot be *made* to affect the mind of a sinner, like the denunciation "the soul that sinneth it shall die." In like manner, the declarations, "The carnal mind is" *not* "enmity against God;" "if a man be" *not* "born again, he shall see the kingdom of God;" "he that doth" *not* "repent and believe, shall be saved;" "and he that is" *without* "holiness, shall see the Lord;" "and he that doth" *not* "deny himself, shall be a disciple of Christ;" cannot be made to have the same effect in exciting fear, or producing conviction of sin, or repentance, or faith, as the contrary declarations. It is idle to talk of the power of God, or of the goodness of God, or of the mercy of God, or of his paternal character; we may as well rely on these attributes to prevent the effects of fire, or water, or poison, on the natural body. We may as well play with the adder, or meet the hungry lion, or leap the precipice, or stand before the cannon's mouth, confiding in God's goodness and our sincerity to prevent harm, as to disregard or oppose all the great laws of his moral government, and our moral nature, and expect that his power and goodness will avert the consequences, and save us, without the truth, or by the instrumentality of error.

Believing then, as we do, that the evangelical system is the faith delivered to the saints, *the very gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ;* and that the rejection of it is fatal, on the ground of crime, and fatal in the nature of things, as moral beings are constituted; we are bound to preach this gospel, as, in our opinion, indispensable to salvation. We are bound to do this, because to do otherwise, would be to preach the gospel without sanctions; which would render it of none effect. We are bound to do it also, because, as men

are constituted, *opinion* has influence, and we owe its efficacy to Christ, and to the souls of men. The Gospel, if it had been preached without sanctions by Christ and his Apostles, would have excited little opposition, and have done little good. The Scribes and Pharisees would not have been offended at Christ, but would have admired his catholic spirit, if to his doctrine he had subjoined; 'These are my opinions;—but those who differ from me, are doubtless honest and sincere, and will be mercifully accepted by our heavenly Father.' Idolaters also, would have added Christ, as a god, to their thirty thousand gods, if he, in return, would have given to each, and to his worshippers, the right hand of fellowship. So it is, precisely, in respect to the doctrines of the evangelical system. "*Charity*" would "*suffer long*" and be as "*kind*" to us, as to Mohammedans, or Infidels, or the diversities of liberal men; if the concession could only be made by us, that those who reject these doctrines may be innocently and safely wrong. It is holding them as essential to salvation, and all opposite systems as fatal, that overcomes the patience of *charity itself*, and brings upon us the retribution of invective and obloquy. All this, however, only discloses the efficacy, upon the consciences of men, of preaching the truth with its sanctions: and increases our obligations, and our motives, to do it faithfully.

I would not incumber the subject here, with the question, what will become of the heathen, if the faith delivered to the saints be essential to salvation? For, if it were true, that those to whom it has not been delivered, may be saved without it; it would not follow, that those can be, to whom it has been delivered, and by whom it has been rejected.

Nor is it needful to adjust the seeming or real differences, of those Christians, who hold, some to more, and others to less of the system. For the question is not, *how much of this system* may be misunderstood, consistently with sanctification by that which is still embraced: but, can it be rejected entirely, by those who possess the Bible; and they, who do it, be sanctified without it, and saved by the instrumentality of error? Nor is it a question of any consequence whether it be *possible* for a man to be saved who rejects this system, if it be, in fact, as we believe it to be, the Gospel. For what if it were possible for a man who rejects it to be saved, does that prove that he will be saved? And do we need no higher evidence that we shall be saved, than is implied in the fact of its bare possibility?

Nor is the duty of preaching this faith, as indispensable to salvation, affected at all by the consideration that we are fallible, and may possibly be mistaken in our opinions: for, so long as we believe, whether correctly or not, we must act ac-

cording to our belief. Nor is this sitting in the judgment seat, and "dealing damnation round the land;" at all more than our believing certain human productions to be the laws of the state, and that some men have transgressed them, and will be punished, is sitting in the judgment seat, and dealing damnation round the land.

Nor is it bigotry. Bigotry consists in a blind attachment to opinions, from inclination, passion, and prejudice; and may be manifested, in as high a degree, in the avowal and propagation of liberal, as evangelical opinions.

Neither can I perceive in what respect it is uncharitable. For what is charity? Not a decision of the understanding, but an affection of the heart. It is *love—good will—benevolence.*—But while it leads us to hope, as long as there is room to hope, that a fellow creature is not guilty, and in danger; it does not lead us to resist competent evidence of the fact, or to conceal from him our opinion of his character, or our sense of his danger. The more we love him, the more plain will be our note of admonition, the more earnest our intreaty, and the more vigorous our exertion, to save his soul from death. Charity, does not consist in creeds of strict, or liberal import; but in the temper of heart, with which they are adopted, and propagated. It is very possible, that a liberal creed, may be associated with a haughty and vindictive temper; and what is called a severe creed, with the meekness and gentleness of Christ. "Charity suffereth long and is kind" *under severe provocations.* "Envieth not" *a successful competitor for popular favor.* "Vaunteth not itself;" *does not trumpet its own virtues and praises.* "Is not puffed up" *with vain self-estimation.* "Doth not behave itself unseemly" *by a light and vain deportment.* "Seeketh not her own;" *has no pleasure in monopolies.* "Is not easily provoked" *by the perverseness of men.* "Thinketh no evil," *plotteth none, suspecteth none.* "Rejoiceth not in iniquity;" *as if the means could sanctify the end.* But "rejoiceth in the truth," *as having to do with the affections.* "Beareth all things;" *revilings and misrepresentations, with meekness.* "Believeth all things" *just as they are revealed, as those knew all things who had an unction from the Holy One.* "Endureth all things;" *temptations with fortitude, afflictions with submission.*

5. The faith delivered to the saints is to be defended by earnest written discussion.

The opinion that controversy is of no use because disputants never convince each other, is derived from a very limited view of the subject. It is nearer the truth to say, that no great advance has been made in science, religion, or politics, without controversy. And certain it is that no æra of power-

ful theological discussion has ever past away, without an abiding effect in favor of truth. The discussions of Augustine, of Luther, and of Calvin, are felt to this day; and the controversial writings of Edwards have been to error, what the mounds and dykes of Holland have been to the sea.

One danger only is to be guarded against; it is that of diminishing, in the public mind, the high sense which has existed of the criminality and danger of error. If our personal attachments, and literary friendships, and courtesy of manner, should bring down the high and holy subject of contending for the faith, to a cool and amicable trial of classical and polemical skill; the public feeling would soon be chilled, and fall to this low level of practical estimation. Every discussion of the doctrines of Christianity should be conducted with benevolence evidently, but in a language and in a manner which carries home to the hearts of men, the full impression of our deep conviction, both of the criminality, and the danger, of rejecting the truth.

6. Another means of defending the faith is to be found in a careful maintenance of the apostolic tenure of membership in the visible church.

This, there is no reason to doubt, consisted in a credible profession of repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. And as long as these continued to be the terms of admission, the primitive churches continued in a healthful state. But when, as a matter of courtesy or of authority, the tenure of membership was altered, after the protection and control of civil government began; a door was opened at which the state entered, unsanctified, the church of God; and, in the progress of ages, reared the most terrific despotism of superstition and ambition, that ever provoked God, or oppressed men.

At the reformation, the same interposition of government modified the terms of admission; and, by the secular and unsanctified mass thrown upon the church, hindered its consummation, and prepared the way for that swift and great declension from evangelical doctrine and vital godliness which followed.

When our fathers came to this land, in their flight from persecution, it was, primarily, that they might build the church, according to the evangelical pattern, of lively stones only; and, in the beginning, the tenure of membership was a professed belief in the doctrines of the reformation, attended by credible evidence of regeneration. This strict tenure of membership, about the close of the first generation, became a subject of complaint; by those who were excluded from office, because they could not conscientiously join the church; and by those whose children, on the same account, remained unbaptized; and by emigrants from England, of less strict-

ness of religious sentiment, who came over after the first perils of settlement were past. These united, constituted a strong party in the state, who were for admitting all persons of a regular life to full communion, on their making a profession of their belief in the christian religion, without any inquiry with respect to a change of heart; and for regarding all who had been baptized in infancy, as, on that ground, entitled, in adult age, to membership in the church. The legislators generally favored the liberal side of the question, and some ministers. The innovation was, however, strenuously resisted by the rest of the clergy, and by the churches almost universally. While hosts without assembled, and murmurs long and loud were heard, they stood to defend the gates of Zion from the intrusion of the stranger. At length, however, they were overpowered by numbers. The gates of the holy city were burst open, and the world rushed in, and took possession of the baptismal water and the sacramental host Thus, at a stroke, was prostrated the system of church organization established by heaven to perpetuate pure doctrine and vital piety; and, from this time, for three quarters of a century, both declined, in a manner the most rapid and alarming which the churches of New-England ever witnessed.

In the course of ten years after this event, a suspension of divine influence, in the conviction and conversion of sinners, took place, so signal and alarming, as induced the legislature to call a Synod to inquire into and report the causes. The alarm was great, and the lamentations loud and many. Mr. Stoughton, in an election Sermon, 1660, said, "Alas, how is New-England in danger, this day, to be lost, even in New-England! to be buried in its own ruins! How sadly may we lament that all are not *Israel* that are *now* of Israel! How is the good grain diminished, and the chaff increased!" In 1683, the Minister of Weymouth declared, that "A great failure has taken place in the work of conversion, in the frequency of a credible profession of religion, and in the tokens of formality, hypocrisy and apostasy." Dr. Increase Mather said in 1697 "Dr. Owen has proved, that, the letting go, by the primitive churches, of the principle, that particular churches ought to consist of regenerate persons only, brought in the great antichristian apostasy." In the year 1700, he predicted, that, if the begun declension, (occasioned by the admission of unrenewed men into the church,) should continue to progress for thirty years to come, as it had done for thirty years past; the more conscientious people, would be constrained to gather churches out of churches. A prediction, which was extensively verified, in about that time. This suspension of divine influence, and decline of vital religion, continued until the time of Edwards, the Luther of New-England; who,

by his example, and by his unanswerable treatise on the terms of communion, revived the practice of receiving to the Lord's table none but those, who furnished credible evidence of a moral renovation by the Spirit, and of repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. A practice, which has been steadily increasing, from his day to this; and, with it, evangelical doctrine, and revivals of religion.

By this course of ample experiment, in the primitive church, at the reformation, and in New England; the point is settled, that evangelical doctrines cannot be maintained, in the churches of our Lord, but by maintaining the apostolic tenure of membership. Let men of the world be amalgamated with the pious in the church, and soon evangelical opinions will be exiled, or remain only in her creed a dead letter.

In the application of this subject we invite the attention, to what has been advanced in this discourse, of those whose minds have been unsettled and perplexed, in respect to the claims of the liberal and evangelical systems to be regarded as the faith delivered to the saints: or, who have been accustomed to regard the latter system as unintelligible, contradictory, absurd, and of no salutary practical influence.

We are sensible, that, in our land, there are many, who have no opportunity of hearing the evangelical system of doctrines stated in a manner which its advocates would approve: and that no small prejudice has arisen against it, through misapprehension. But, with his Bible in his possession, we are constrained to believe, that, every man may know what the Scriptures say on these subjects; and that, if the evangelical system be divine, it cannot be rejected with impunity. If, to any, this opinion shall seem severe, and, as some have said, as if we were *glad* that many will be lost; we can say, with an Apostle, and call God to witness, that "we have great heaviness and continual sorrow in our hearts, for our brethren, our kinsmen according to the flesh;" whom, as we understand the Bible, we cannot but regard as fatally deceived.

If the effects of their mistake were, in our view, confined to this transient scene; or, if we could believe, that the truth of God, as a whole, could be misunderstood and rejected, consistently with that moral renovation of the heart, which is indispensable to communion with God, and admission to heaven; we might hold our peace: for of what possible consequence can it be to us, whether our fellow men agree with, or differ from us, on points, which, in a few days, may be of no consequence. Time is too short, and eternity is too long, to justify great solicitude about things which affect us only here. But if, as we believe, all the qualifications for heaven have ceased from the heart of man, and all the means

of their restoration, lie in the system of revealed truth, and the efficacy given to it by the special influence of the Holy Spirit; and if God will not sanctify by the instrumentality of error, where his truth is rejected in the presence, or within the reach of ample evidence: how can we, in such circumstances, behold our fellow men, our friends, and neighbours, moving onward to the confirmed state of a miserable eternity, and not be deeply affected?—We beseech you, brethren, "by the meekness and gentleness of Christ," that you be not offended with our plainness, in this discourse, nor with our importunity in its application. We respectfully, but earnestly, invite your attention to the argument which has been submitted to your consideration; and intreat that, in the light of it, and of God's holy word, you will give to your own opinions one revision more; one *careful, prayerful, immediate revision:* for if you are wrong, it will soon be too late to retrieve the mistake. Allow us to ask you then, affectionately—solemnly, whether such collateral evidence, as we have been able to lay into the scale of evangelical exposition, can be the result of accident; or can be found, to be laid in the opposite scale? Are the doctrines of the liberal system, contained in the text, according to its most direct and obvious meaning? Do they receive the sanction of approbation from the most devout persons, and the sentence of condemnation from the irreligious and vicious? Does the liberal system produce the same objections, which the faith delivered to the saints produced? Is it gladly received by the common people, and rejected by the same sort of men, in the higher orders of society, as rejected the Gospel? Do the doctrines of the liberal system, occasion a virulent hostility against them, in such circumstances as show, that it does not result from the ardent love of truth, or hatred of error? Do they occasion the same fears and anxieties about a future state, the same deep conviction of sin, and the same joyful, and often sudden, conversion to God, as are manifested under evangelical preaching, and in revivals of religion? Do the doctrines of the liberal system, produce revivals of religion at all; and not rather, awaken prejudices, and array influence, against them. Do they produce the same style of piety; as deep, solemn, and ardent, as the faith produced which was delivered to the saints? Do they inspire the same solicitude and effort for the awakening and conversion of sinners, under the light of the gospel; or the same compassion for the heathen, and enterprise for their salvation? Does the liberal system inspire the same assurance of its being true, attended by the same unwavering constancy in its profession, which the faith delivered to the saints inspired? And does it produce the same assurance of hope, and the same sustaining joy "full of glory," in the hour of death?

We make the appeal to your consciences and your hearts, whether you do not perceive and know, that the liberal system is naked, in respect to these great effects, which the faith delivered to the saints did produce: and whether, all of them do not, with undeniable notoriety, cluster about the path of the evangelical system. If this be so, can that system be false which produces the effects, so many, and so great, which were produced by the faith delivered to the saints: and can that be the true faith, which is so utterly destitute of them? The Gospel, is the most powerful moral cause, which has ever operated in this world. Its effects, of course, cannot be hid, and cannot be the same with a system in direct opposition to it. The three or four first centuries brought out, unequivocally, the effects of the faith delivered to the saints which we have noted: these, all of them, are found associated still, with the evangelical system; and none of them, with the liberal system. Is, then, the liberal system, the faith once delivered to the saints? Why does it not produce the same effects which that produced? Has the Gospel changed its nature, or lost its power; or has the human nature changed: or, is the liberal system another Gospel? Ponder well this subject; for the judge is at the door; and the day will burst upon us soon, that will try every man's faith, and heart, and work.

Allow us then, once more, to refer it to your consciences, whether, admitting the evidence from exposition to be on each side the same, this decisive weight of collateral evidence ought not to withdraw your confidence from the liberal system, and to decide your judgment in favor of the evangelical system, as the very "word of God, and faith of Jesus." Every great system of truth and of falsehood, is attended by a mass of presumptive collateral evidence, for or against it. And, while the evangelical system commends itself to your confidence by all that variety of collateral evidence which has been exhibited, and the opposite system is wholly unattended by it; dare you, will you, reject the evangelical, and risk your salvation on the liberal system? Does the thought, as you read, offer to rise, 'Possibly, after all, my own system may be a deception, and that which I have disputed be true?' Let it rise: for it may be the movement, on your mind, of the long resisted Spirit, suggesting to your conscience, "this is the way, walk ye in it." Does fear flash across your mind, at times, the thought, as a momentary reality, 'I may be wrong, after all; and these doctrines, which produce revivals of religion, and such joy in death, may be the faith delivered to the saints?' Stifle not the unwelcome conviction; for it may be the commencement of eternal life in your soul. "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way? and walk therein, and ye shall find rest to your souls."